



# **Strategic Plan**

## **FY25 - FY30**



## **Acknowledgements**

Our deep appreciation to all who supported and participated in the strategic planning process.

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**The Friends of the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library for their constant support**

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### **Town Government:**

Steve Poulos, Wenham Town Administrator  
Joe Domelowicz, Hamilton Town Manager

**All of the residents and patrons who participated in filling out the public survey.**

## History of Hamilton and Wenham

Located 25 miles north of Boston in Essex County, both Hamilton and Wenham share a rich colonial heritage dating from the earliest years of English colonization. In 1638, John Winthrop, Jr., the son of the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, purchased the land of present-day Essex County from the tribal Agawam leader, Sachem Masconomo, for a sum of twenty pounds. This tract included the original settlements of Cape Ann and most of Danvers and Middleton ending at the Merrimack River. By the time Masconomo died in 1658, his tribe had been overwhelmed by war and disease. A monument dedicated in 1910 on Sagamore Hill in the northeast corner of Hamilton marks his gravesite.

In 1638, Hugh Peters, the Puritan minister of the First Church of Salem, delivered a sermon to a small group of colonists on the banks of the now named Wenham Lake. His text referred to "Enon, near Salem, because there was much water there," a biblical reference to John 3:23. This small outlying community became the first to break away from Salem and establish its own township. In 1643, the General Court of Massachusetts declared that "Enon shall be called Wenham and be granted to be a Town and hath liberty to send a deputy." It is assumed that the name "Wenham" was chosen because many of the early settlers had emigrated from the areas of Great and Little Wenham in Suffolk County, England. Encompassing seven square miles of land, Wenham has never changed its boundaries from the date of its founding.

The town of Ipswich, founded in 1633, originally included the Ipswich Hamlet in its southern parish. In 1793, restless and protesting the high taxes levied by Ipswich, the citizens of the Hamlet petitioned for autonomy. They were successfully represented in the Ipswich Court by their pastor, Manasseh Cutler, D.D. Later that year, the Massachusetts Legislature incorporated the Hamlet as a town and invested it "with all the powers, privileges and immunities which towns in this Commonwealth by law are entitled to enjoy." Dr. Cutler renamed the town "Hamilton" in honor of the first Secretary of the United States Treasury, Alexander Hamilton.

For both communities, small-scale farming was the primary occupation until the late 19th century. Early industry was limited to a few mills clustered on the Ipswich River. For the residents of both towns, the long New England winters afforded time to develop small cottage industries. Farmers learned the trade of shoemaking and, by the mid-eighteenth century, little ten-foot square shoe shops called ten-footers dotted the landscape. By the mid-nineteenth century, the local shoe trade provided piecework for the shoe factories in Danvers and Lynn. Although the General Court established Bay Road in 1644, Hamilton and Wenham remained relatively isolated until the arrival of the Boston and Maine Railroad in 1839. This helped to spur the development of commercial activities.

In Hamilton, the establishment of the Myopia Hunt Club in 1876 and the development of large estates changed the image of Hamilton from a farming town to a rural retreat. Chebacco Lake became a resort area in the late 19th century with hotels built to accommodate visitors. Hamilton gained summer residents when the Methodist Camp Meeting Ground at Asbury Grove opened in 1859. In Wenham, the ice cut from Wenham Lake became a coveted luxury item, reaching the height of its fame by the mid-nineteenth century when it was shipped to hotels in London.

Hamilton and Wenham became increasingly suburban after World War II. The construction of nearby Route 128 in the mid-1950's spurred rapid housing development. Despite this growth, both communities have preserved their distinctive historical characteristics and charm. Today both towns retain their rural sensibility with residential neighborhoods, protected open spaces, and small farms. Some of the large estates still remain; some in private ownership and others permanently protected such as Appleton Farms. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary sits on the site of the former Mandell estate in Hamilton, and Gordon College is built on the Prince estate in Wenham. The 50-acre estate of Ruby Boyd Miller in Wenham is now home to the all-girls Academy at Penguin Hall.

Notable residents of Hamilton and Wenham include author Paul Harding, Red Sox pitcher Bob Stanley, and General George S. Patton whose estate has been left in perpetual care to the town of Hamilton.

Hamilton and Wenham are bordered on the south by Beverly, on the east by Manchester-by-the-Sea and Essex, on the northwest by Topsfield and Ipswich, and on the west by Danvers. They lie approximately six miles north of Salem and twenty-one miles north of Boston. The eastern end of the towns is crossed by Massachusetts Route 128. Route 1A crosses through the center of both towns. Hamilton and Wenham lie along the Newburyport section of the Newburyport/Rockport Line of the MBTA Commuter Rail. The tip of the north runway of Beverly Municipal Airport lies just within Wenham.

The combined population of both towns in the 2020 U.S. census was 12,532 virtually the same as it was in the 2010 census. The towns have a largely residential feel with many traditional homes and large open spaces. The downtown areas of each town have a small business district with locally owned shops.

Together, Hamilton and Wenham take pride in their shared heritage and the uniqueness of their institutions.



## Hamilton and Wenham Public Library

The town of Hamilton had a social library in 1817 called the Second Social Library. This was a fee-based library and was active until 1853. In 1891 the Free Library of Hamilton, later called the Hamilton Public Library was established. The library moved many times before its final destination on Bay Road. Wenham also had a fee-based library. In 1857 members paid a fee of one dollar to join the Wenham Library Association. The town voted to make the library a public library in 1885.

In March of 1994, concerned residents from both towns formed a committee to investigate how a joint library could be formed. In May of 1995, after another committee had been formed in December, each town voted the appropriate funds to research the feasibility of a joint library. Through the efforts of many citizens, the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library became the first regional library in the state of Massachusetts. The library was opened in December of 2001 with a consolidated collection comprising the collections of the Wenham Town Library and the Hamilton Public Library. The result was a 29,000 square foot, full-service ADA compliant facility with space for public service desks, a growing collection of materials, meeting rooms, study rooms, and a large meeting space that can accommodate up to 100 people. The former high school gymnasium is attached to the library and serves as the Hamilton-Wenham Recreation Center. It remains the only regional library in state of Massachusetts.



**FY'23 Comparative Statistics**

\*FY'20 & FY'21 impacted by COVID-19 pandemic closure

	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY21</b>	<b>FY20</b>
<b>Circulation</b>	<b>215,855</b>	<b>224,196</b>	<b>166,857</b>	<b>217,839</b>
<b>Holds Placed &amp; Filled</b>	<b>92,874</b>	<b>105,406</b>	<b>171,082</b>	<b>103,730</b>
<b>New Library Cards</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>558</b>
<b>Overdrive Circulation</b>	<b>19,913</b>	<b>20,144</b>	<b>19,352</b>	<b>18,205</b>
<b>Reference Questions</b>	<b>7,317</b>	<b>10,473</b>	<b>10,234</b>	<b>10,296</b>
<b>Study Room Usage</b>	<b>1,261</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,682</b>
<b>Meeting Room Usage</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>Museum Pass Usage</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>42</b>

## Strategic Planning Process

The library Director and the Joint Board of Library Trustees began the planning process in January 2023 by developing a timeline for each part of the strategic process. On March 8, 2023 Michelle Eberle, Consultant from the Massachusetts Library System, conducted a SOAR analysis with two community focus groups. These focus group members were identified by library department heads and administration, and both an afternoon session and an evening session were held.

On April 1, 2023, the library launched a campaign to collect responses to its User Needs Assessment Survey. The launch of the survey coincided with Town Meeting day for both towns, and book marks with QR code links to the survey were handed out to residents attending town meeting. The survey was available online through the library's website and paper copies were made available at the library. The Library received 312 responses to the public survey.

The library director conducted a mission and visioning exercise along with a SOAR exercise with the Joint Board of Trustees in April 2023 and with all library staff in May 2023.

All of the information collected was synthesized by the Director and the Assistant Director to identify the top priorities for the library for the next five years. A new mission statement was developed as was a library values statement.

The Joint Board of Library Trustees reviewed a draft of the completed plan in September 2023 and voted to approve the final FY'25-FY'30 Strategic Plan on October 12, 2023.





## **Mission Statement**

**The Hamilton-Wenham Public Library is a vital civic anchor for the community. The Library connects people to information and resources, supports literacy and education, promotes lifelong learning through diverse programs, and is a welcoming space for all.**

## **Values**

**Our shared values are what guide our library staff as we work with the community and each other.**

- We value equitable access to information and lifelong learning opportunities.**
- We value intellectual freedom and unbiased representation of all viewpoints in collections, programs, and services.**
  - We value the contributions of an engaged, dedicated, and innovative library staff.**
  - We value the power of collaboration with community members, leaders, and organizations.**
- We value a welcoming and safe environment that is open and accessible to all.**



# Goals and Objectives



## **Goal 1: Community - Engage the community by providing a place with services that connect people and help bridge divides.**

### **1.1 Explore options to expand library hours to meet the needs of the community**

- Action - develop a plan to reopen the library on Monday nights
- Action - reconfigure staff assignments to open the library at 9:30
- Action - work with the union and the town to develop a plan and funding to provide Sunday hours

### **1.2 Develop a marketing and communications plan to inform the community of everything available at the library**

- Action - work with staff to implement new means of communication
- Action - explore emerging social media trends and add new avenues as they apply to the library
- Action - develop a branding kit to be used on all marketing materials

### **1.3 Increase patron access to the library**

- Action - explore expanded and new means (i.e. Bookmobile) to get materials to patrons including expansion of home delivery.
- Action - develop a plan to improve marketing the library's online personalized recommendations program
- Action - explore the options for adding smart lockers so patrons can pick up holds at their convenience

### **1.4 Increase community awareness of library resources and materials**

- Action - develop a welcome packet of library services that can be given to new library card holders
- Action - hold a quarterly option for building tours or open houses featuring unique library services (3D printer, local history collection, etc.)
- Action - hold a Welcome to Town reception for new residents once year in collaboration with other town departments and organizations

### **1.5 Establish and maintain connections with community partners**

- Action - key staff will attend the monthly Hamilton-Wenham Community Providers meetings and the library will continue to host these meetings on site
- Action - the children's and teen library will maintain strong relationships with the public schools and will develop a plan to reach out to other educational groups in town (preschools, home schoolers, etc.)



## Goal 2: Facility - Maintain, preserve, and improve the library's physical space to create a convenient, accessible and vital space for contemporary needs.

### 2.1 Develop a building maintenance plan for the library

- Action - work with the facilities manager to develop a monthly and yearly maintenance task list
- Action - establish documentation for the age of physical plant infrastructure and develop a timeline and plan for replacement
- Action - develop a 20-year capital funding timeline for facilities needs

### 2.2 Implement more sustainable options for patrons and library staff

- Action - work with staff to reduce use of paper handouts and forms over the next five years
- Action - investigate additional storage for bicycles and electric bike charging stations to encourage patrons to bike to the library
- Action - explore grant funding to install an electric vehicle charging station(s) in the parking lot

### 2.3 The Library grounds will be maintained and treated with pride

- Action - work with the towns on the Library Management Agreement to ensure the outside grounds are being maintained properly in all seasons
- Action - explore the option of adding additional outdoor space for patrons to use in the warmer months
- Action - work with the towns and the recreation center to fund paving the parking lot as well as adding additional signs for staff parking to ease congestion





### **Goal 3: Staff - Retain and recruit exceptional staff and supply the tools, training, and inspiration for them to succeed in their work.**

#### **3.1 Increase opportunities for staff advancement within the organization**

- Action - work with the towns to increase funding for part-time staff to become full-time staff
- Action - director and department heads will work with all staff to develop a yearly set of goals to encourage new ideas and advancement

#### **3.2 Encourage all staff to be aware of relevant trainings and allow the time for them to attend continuing education options**

- Action - develop a working list of organizations offering trainings and workshops, both in person and virtual, to share with staff
- Action - increase funding in the conference line item allowing more staff to be able to attend local conferences
- Action - encourage staff to attend relevant local consortium meetings on a regular basis, and to volunteer for other boards and committees as time allows

#### **3.3 Increase in-house staff resources to ensure staff are empowered to deal with any situation that arises**

- Action - develop a crisis communication playbook to help staff deal with difficult or challenging situations
- Action - create and maintain an emergency response plan and provide staff with emergency training regularly (ie. active shooter, fire drills, first aid, CPR, etc.)
- Action - update policy handbooks at each public service desk to ensure staff have the most current information when working with patrons

#### **3.4 Develop staff engagement with the library board of trustees**

- Action - develop a plan for library staff to attend board of trustees' meetings on a monthly basis to share information on their department/role at the library
- Action - invite board members to attend regular library events such as the Friends Annual Meeting, Vehicle Night, etc.

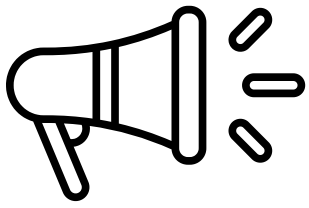




## Goal 4: Collection - Provide the communities with a diverse, up-to-date, and relevant collection

- 4.1 Evaluate funding of collections and shift resources as needed to meet patron demands**
- Action - compare circulation and funding to increase the percentage of dollars spent on eBooks and eAudiobooks
  - Action - continue to fund unique collections and explore ways to expand the library of things to offer items of interest to the community
  - Action - develop a plan to shift collection space as patron needs change and technology changes
- 4.2 Develop a plan to make the local history collection more accessible to the community**
- Action - use the Preservation Study done in 2021 to develop a Local History collection development plan
  - Action - explore funding to identify and start digitizing collections most important to the community (Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle, high school yearbooks, etc.)
  - Action - hire a local history librarian to be able to work exclusively with the collection and with patrons
- 4.3 Spotlight collections and authors in dynamic displays that are inclusive and diverse**
- Action - develop a plan for staff members responsible for displays throughout the library and ensure each display encompasses diverse viewpoints
  - Action - evaluate supplies for display areas and purchase new items as needed to ensure those areas look neat and modern
- 4.4 Establish a formal gift/donation program and policy for the library**
- Action - the director will work with the board of trustees on a gift and donation policy for community members that want to make memorial book donations
  - Action - purchase standard book plates and create a letter template to acknowledge donations
  - Action - publicize new policy and procedure and educate staff





## **Goal 5: Services and Programs - Provide inclusive services and programming that serve community interests and needs.**

### **5.1 Implement a plan to hold library programs at a variety of times and places to meet the needs of all users**

- Action - work with staff that plan programs to ensure scheduling is done to accommodate various patron needs
- Action - establish a plan to offer additional story time programs for working families
- Action - work with community partners to offer programming at offsite locations

### **5.2 Maintain a presence at community wide events (Pride Picnic, Volunteer Fair, Farmer's Market, etc.)**

- Action - develop a calendar of community wide events that happen each year
- Action - establish a check list of standard items to bring to events to streamline the process for staff
- Action - purchase additional supplies to support outreach (light tables, brochure holders, pop-up shade tent)

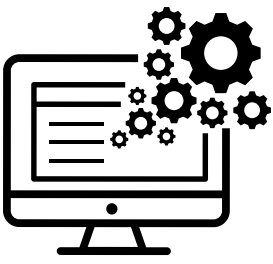
### **5.3 Create a plan to offer more intergenerational programming**

- Action - continue to offer Memory Café events once a month
- Action - work with all library departments to offer at least six intergenerational programs a year
- Action - collaborate with the teen volunteer program and the young adult librarian to establish a program for teens to help seniors with technology

### **5.4 Develop library programs and events that celebrate reading**

- Action - continue to develop and expand the annual summer reading program for all ages
- Action - develop a plan to re-establish the One Book, One Community program
- Action - look for opportunities to partner with other organizations or libraries for collaborative events and programs





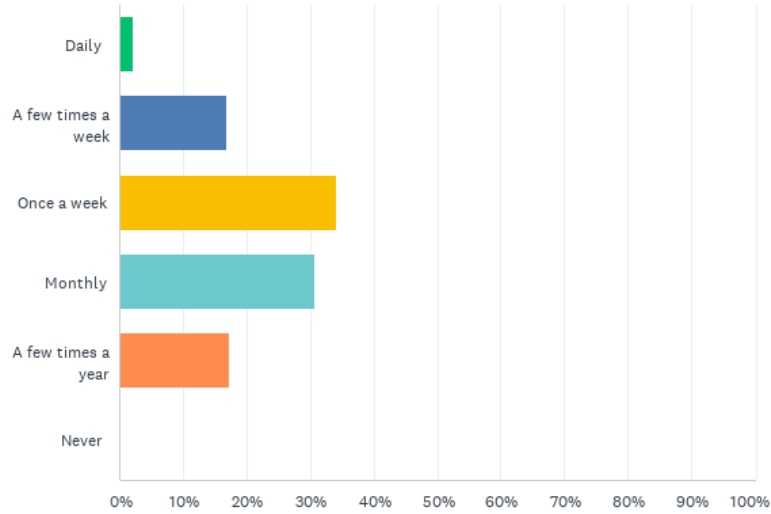
## Goal 6: Technology - Support technology access and digital literacy

- 6.1** Develop a technology plan to establish current and future technology needs and improvements
- Action - work with the technology librarian and the IT consultant to establish one place for all technology information (inventory, maps, policies)
  - Action - increase technology line item each year to ensure town support of library needs and upgrades
  - Action - research options and associated costs to upgrade and manage patron printing services
- 6.2** Plan and implement a new library website
- Action - research website development and host companies in order to plan for associated costs
  - Action - work with staff to assess structure of a new website
  - Action - launch new website by 2026
- 6.3** Prioritize minimizing the digital gap
- Action - continue to offer drop in technology help at least twice a week
  - Action - create video tutorials to help patrons with specific tasks and resources that can be accessed even when the library is closed
  - Action - increase assistive technology items available in the library and also offer items that can circulate as funding allows
- 6.4** Establish staff technology competencies
- Action - work with the IT consultant, the consortium, and the technology librarian to come up with a list of core technology competencies for library staff
  - Action - survey staff to see where staff are feeling strong and where areas for growth and learning are
  - Action - develop a list of training opportunities or classes available to staff to develop and enhance technology skills and schedule time to take those classes

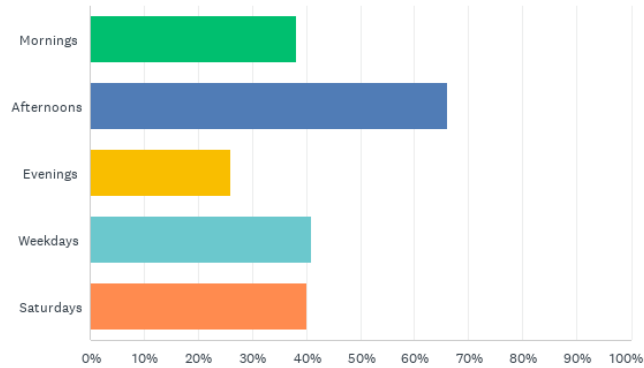


# Appendix A: Survey Results as of May 2023

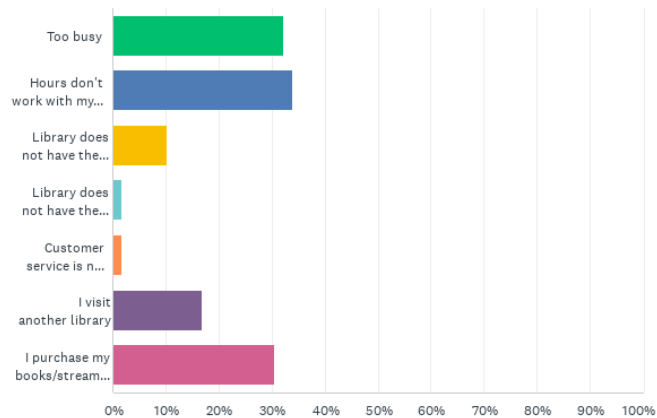
## Q1 How often do you visit the Library?



## Q2 If you visit the Library, when do you usually come? (Select all that apply)

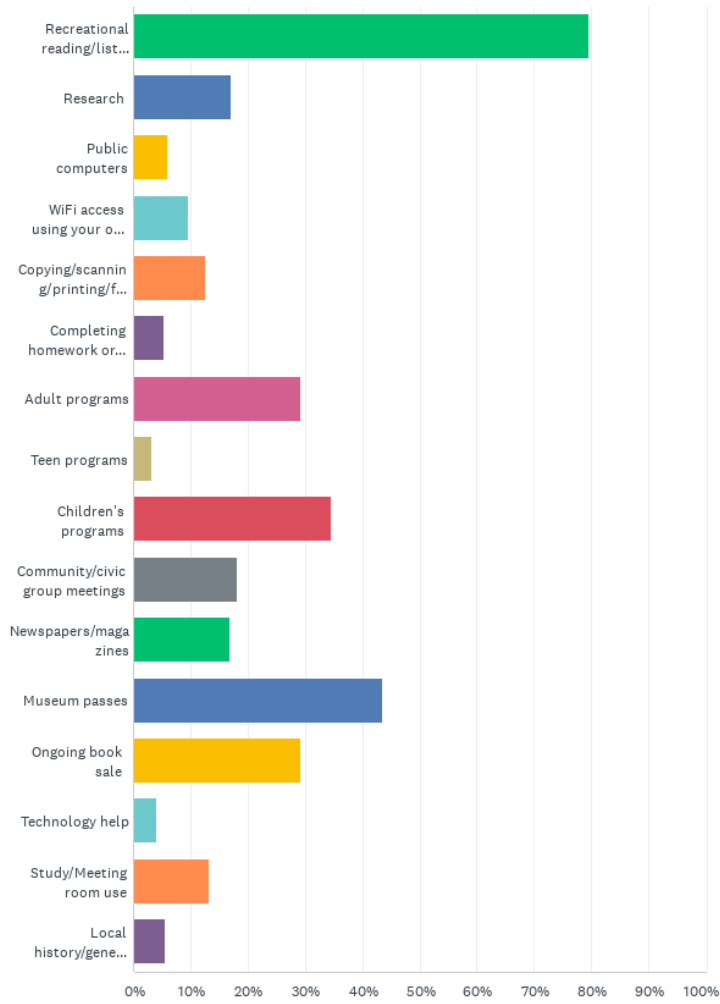


## Q3 If you do not use the Library, why not? (Select all that apply)

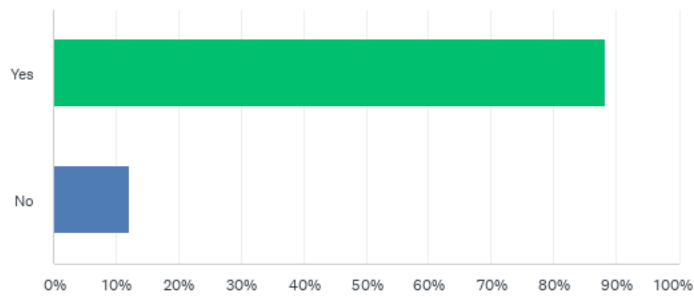


**37 of 59 responses mentioned Sunday hours**  
**6 mentioned staying open until 8 on Mondays**  
**6 respondents mentioned opening earlier on weekdays**

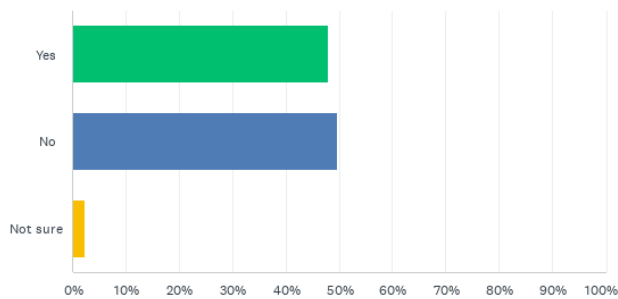
Q4 For what purpose do you use the Library? (Select all that apply)



Q5 Are the Library's hours compatible with your schedule

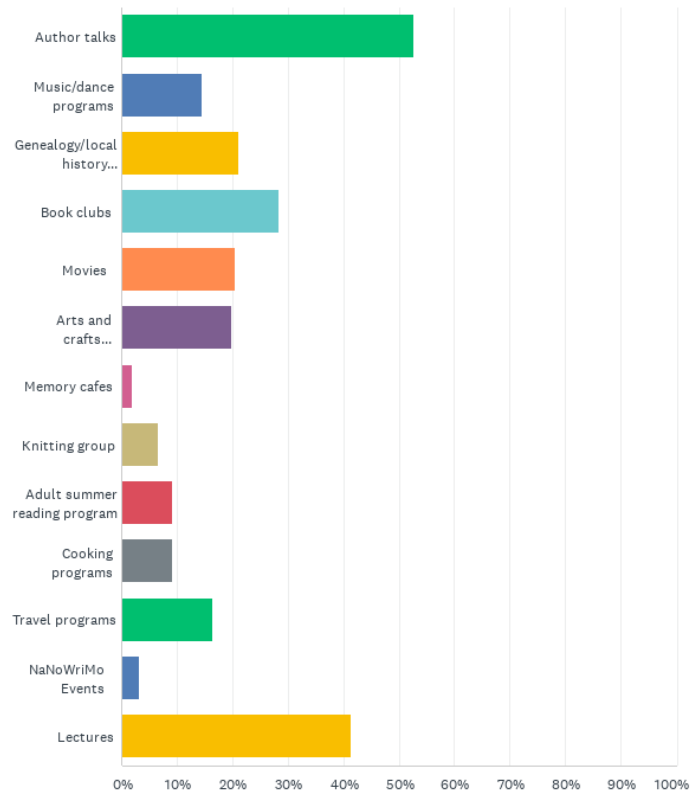


Q6 Have you attended any adult programs at the library?





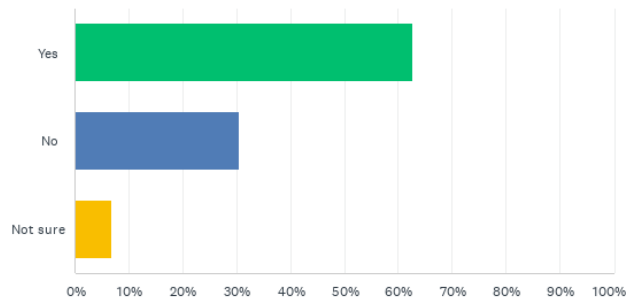
Q7 If yes, what types of programs did you attend? (Select all that apply)



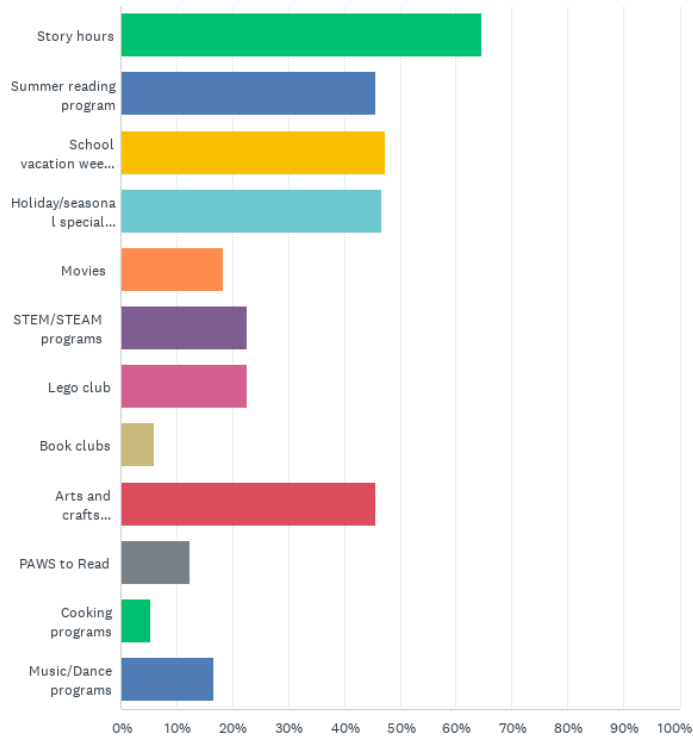
Q8 What other types of adult programs would you like to see the Library present?



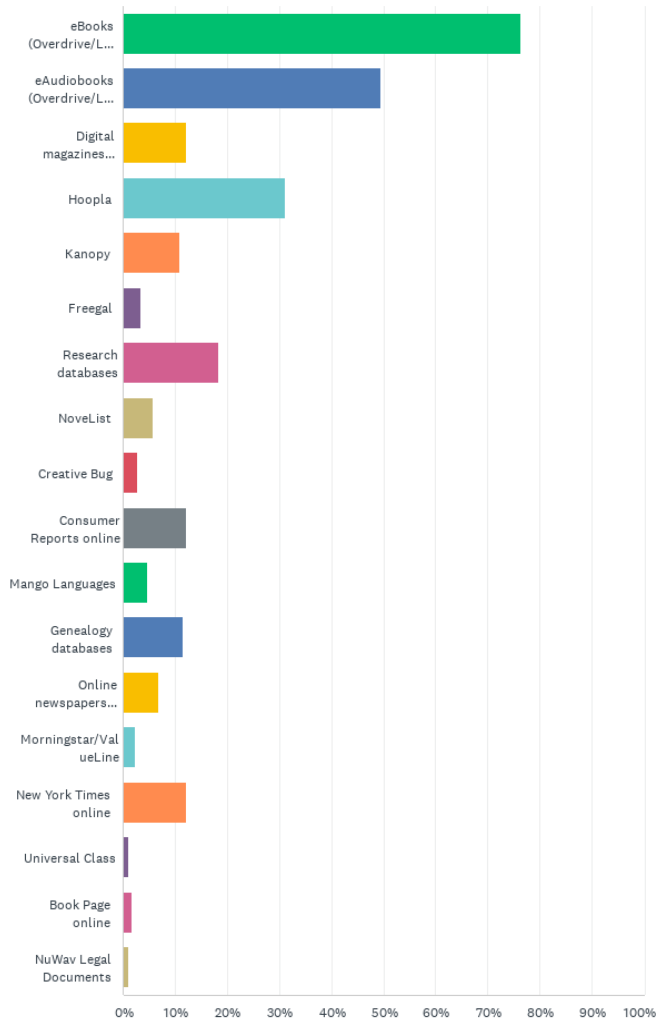
Q9 Have you or your children/grandchildren attended any teen or children's programs at the Library?



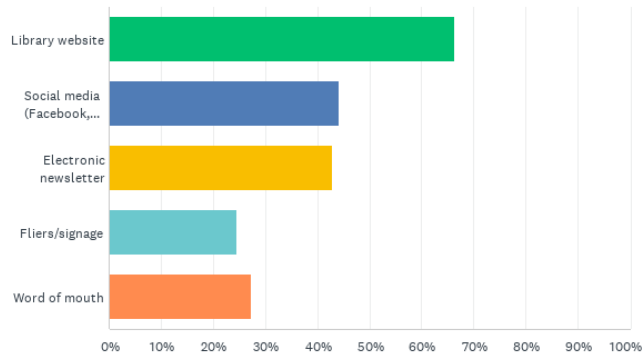
Q10 If yes, which programs were attended? (Select all that apply)



Q12 Do you use any of the following digital services offered by the Library? (Select all that apply)

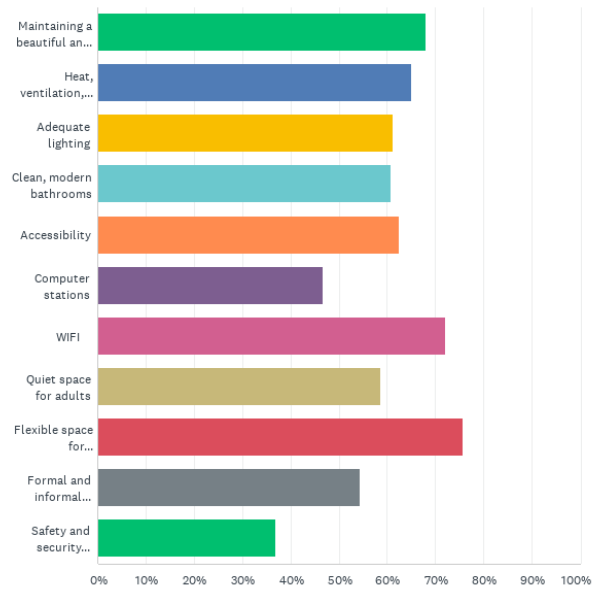


Q13 How do you hear about library services and programs? (Select all that apply)

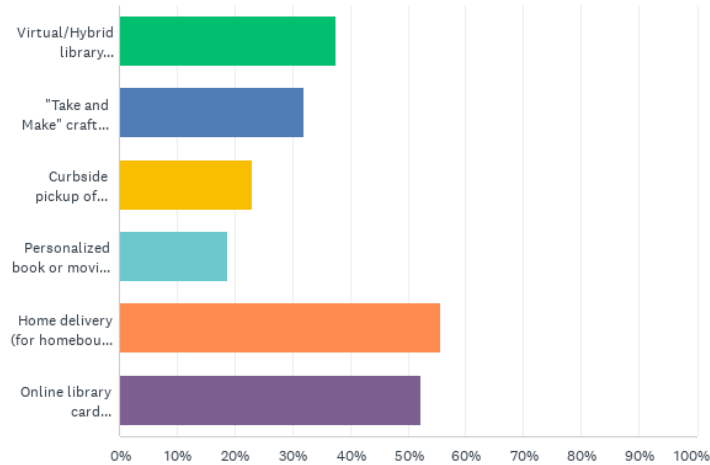


How would you rate your customer satisfaction with the Library?		
	Strongly Agree	Agree
HW Library has excellent customer service.	71.88%	22.36%
I feel welcome when I visit HW Library.	71.88%	20.13%
HW Library understands my needs.	56.49%	28.57%
HW Library staff are extremely helpful.	70.74%	22.83%
HW Library staff are extremely knowledgeable.	64.72%	26.54%
HW Library staff assist me quickly and efficiently.	68.27%	26.60%
I would recommend HW Library to a friend.	78.39%	17.42%

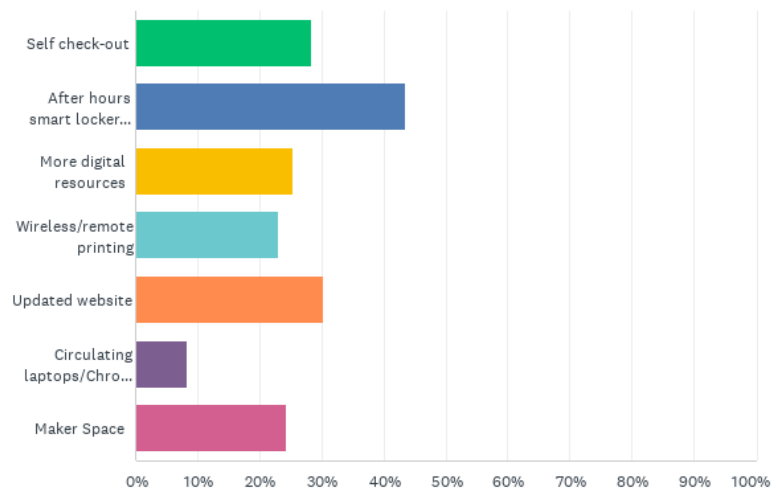
Q15 Please check below any and all aspects of the Library building that you feel are most important to sustain library services in the 21st century.



Q16 The Library added new services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Which ones would you like to see continue?



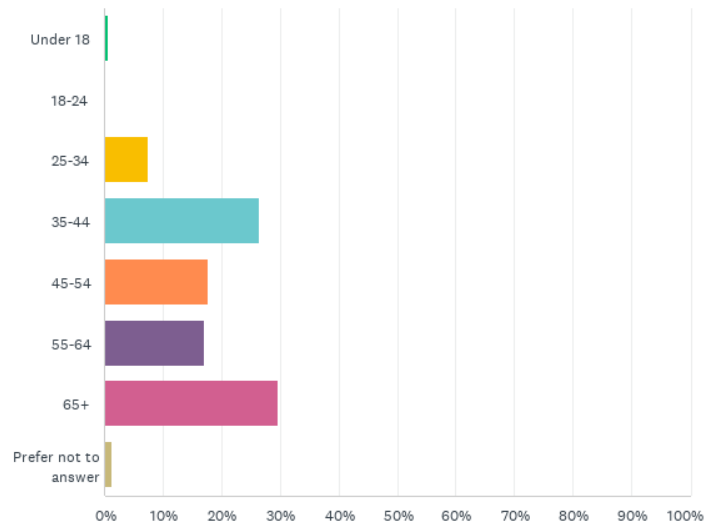
Q17 What additional technology services would you like to see the Library offer?



Q18 How do you see the Library contributing to the future of Hamilton and Wenham?

make integral part provides young children center library essential families safe space find teen  
 groups vital access may services think love library become towns especially  
 learning use great hope ages reading important see library children  
 Hamilton Wenham Continue events place activities library need  
 community together resources hub people  
 gathering place space meeting place meet invaluable books social  
 programs critical offering building gathering maintain s even everyone  
 Senior wonderful HW love enrichment one community members go continue offer way  
 community center young children s programs Keep

Q20 How old are you?



**Appendix B:  
SOAR Exercise Results from Community Focus Groups**

**\*Created by Michelle Eberle - MLS Consultant**

# SOAR

## HAMILTON WENHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active Friends</li> <li>• Amazing book collection</li> <li>• Beautiful space</li> <li>• Kudos to Kim, we are already successful</li> <li>• Pivoted successfully during the pandemic</li> <li>• Creative Programs: Children's, book clubs, museum passes, art collection, Legos, STEM, tea, flower arranging</li> <li>• Future-oriented</li> <li>• Recreation center</li> <li>• Sanctuary of knowledge</li> <li>• Sense of community</li> <li>• Solar</li> <li>• Technology, digital info.</li> <li>• Welcoming, knowledgeable, and devoted staff and director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with schools on collections</li> <li>• Confronting misinformation</li> <li>• Grow Friends</li> <li>• Grants</li> <li>• Intellectual Freedom</li> <li>• Longer hours</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Programs: share local talents, more children's in afternoon; Local businesses, COA, mental health, hiking</li> <li>• Provide space for clubs</li> <li>• Promote research in newsletter</li> <li>• Publicity</li> <li>• No local newspaper in town, end of Chronicle</li> <li>• Town Master Plan - released at end of the year</li> </ul>
ASPIRATIONS	RESULTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amplify and support library as the community center where everyone is welcomed, all are valued, and all knowledge is valued</li> <li>• Children and teens: engage in reading</li> <li>• Continue as a strong community resource with excellent programing reflective of community</li> <li>• Design platform tech (Adobe)</li> <li>• Digital calendar</li> <li>• Increase Friends</li> <li>• Inspire curiosity</li> <li>• Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</li> <li>• Multi-generational resources</li> <li>• Partnerships - food bank, college students</li> <li>• Share local talents: trails, recreating, boating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect data</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Feedback from events</li> <li>• increase donors - share a list of donors with levels of funding - expand fundraising</li> <li>• Increase sharing of local talents/skills</li> <li>• More programs, patrons, funding</li> <li>• Newsletter expanded</li> <li>• Patron feedback</li> <li>• Tracking program attendance and usage statistics</li> <li>• Support from Friends, local organizations</li> <li>• Viability of expansion - 3rd floor, yoga studio, community kitchen</li> </ul>

## Appendix C:

### Staff Values Exercise (which established the Values Statement)

#### Core Values:

##### 1. Access

all of our information, news, etc. is posted everywhere and effectively communicated with patrons and staff  
efficient systems for obtaining, sourcing, and tracking down library materials  
not afraid to try new things  
free access to technology  
not afraid to change things that aren't working for us or for our patrons  
offer/provide a variety of information and connect people with that information  
a place to get information  
online resources for researchers and for everyday use  
resources to use and borrow beyond books  
making patrons feel welcome  
a place to explore ideas, inspirations, research  
access to computers at no charge  
accessible library - parking, walkable area, close to commuter rail  
truly a place for all

##### 2. Collection

Knowledge and preservation of local history and assistance with access  
Access to materials and services at the local level and beyond  
Diverse collection  
Extensive and up to date collection  
library of things items

##### 3. Staff

unique staff with varied talents  
personal assistance to patrons  
reader's advisory skills above par  
empathetic, compassionate and accepting of all  
programming done by all staff that are willing  
staff go the extra mile  
customer service - patron knows that staff want to help them  
welcoming and invested staff  
people from other towns come here because of the staff  
tenacious and dedicated staff  
children's room staff and programs  
listen to the community and work to provide the services and programs that they feel best meets their interests and needs  
circulation staff that are patient and friendly  
friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable  
staff like each other and have formed bonds  
well cared for  
respect for everyone that uses the library

#### 4. Programs

provide entertainment and knowledge  
wide variety of choices at no cost  
embracing unique needs in programming and collection  
programs not just about learning - about being/having fun  
has something for everyone at every stage of life  
programs that enrich lives

#### 5. Building

warm in the winter, cool in the summer  
space to meet with other people  
welcome, open, and productive spaces to use and share  
comfortable meeting place both formal and informal  
large children's and teen space  
well cared for indoor and outdoor space  
close to green spaces  
appreciated by the community and visitors  
beautiful building

#### 6. Community

draw for Ham-Wen community and beyond  
serve many demographics  
community engagement and collaboration  
meeting space for community events  
civic hub  
community focused  
safe and comfortable space with no obligations beyond the basics of decorum  
meeting and study spaces  
easy access for the community  
community values education and inquiry  
knowing patrons names, likes and dislikes  
curious and engaged patrons